

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

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P R 061401Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1797

INFO AMEMBASSY MEXICO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, MILI, PN, PQ

SUBJEC: PRESS REACTION TO USCINCSOUTH INTERVIEW; COMMENTARY
ON TORRIJOS TRIP TO MEXICO

REF: A. PANAMA 3157; B. PANAMA 3194

SUMMARY: EXTENSIVE PRESS COVERAGE OF AP STORY ON
INTERVIEW WITH LT. GEN. MCAULIFFE CONTINUES MAY 5. MEDIA REACTION
IS SLIGHTLY LESS STRIDENT IN TONE AND INCLUDES SOME CALLS FOR
PANAMANIAN RESTRAINT IN THE FACE OF "ZONIAN PROVOCATION".
"CRITICA" CLAIMS HEIGHTENED MEXICAN INTEREST IN TORRIJOS TRIP
AS A RESULT OF MCAULIFFE STORY. TORRIJOS SAYS TRIP WILL "BREAK
70 YEARS OF SILENCE", WHILE GONZALEZ-REFILLA POSITS NEED FOR
MEXICO AS INTERMEDIARY IN EVENT NEGOTIATIONS BREAK DOWN. END
SUMMARY.

1. MAY 5 GOP-CONTROLLED ERSI PRESS ENTERED THE THIRD DAY OF ITS
CAMPAIGN AGAINST AP STORY ON READINESS OF U.S. FORCES IN THE
CANAL ZONE WITH EXTENSIVE, BUT MODERATED COVERAGE. "CRITICA"
EDITORIAL REHASHED THE GOP'S OFFICIAL PRESS BULLETIN RELEASED
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PREVIOUS DAY AND REITERATED ITS DENUNCIATION OF THE MCAULIFFE
INTERVIEW AS PART OF A "CONSPIRACY MASTERMINDED BY SECRETARY
OF STATE VANCE TO TERMINATE THE NEGOTIATIONS." (SEE REF A).

2. "MAUTINO" IN ITS EDITORIAL AND IN THE "MOYOLANDIA"
COLUMN, LABELED GEN. MCAULIFFE'S STATEMENTS AS "DESPERATE ACTS
OF PROVOCATION BY THE ZONIANS", BUT COUNSELED PANAMANIAN TO

REACT "SERENELY AND INTELLIGENTLY" TO SUCH TACTICS.

3. LOCAL TV CHANNEL 4 CARRIED A BRIEF COMMENT EVENING OF MAY 4 THAT THE GOP WAS CONSIDERING FILING A FORMAL PROTEST OVER MCAULIFFE'S STATEMENTS. WE HAVE HEARD NOTHING FURTHER ON THIS REPORT.

4. "CRITICA" LEAD BLAZING "ATTITUDE OF GRINGO TROOPS IN PANAMA MAKE IMPACT ON MEXICANS" IS BASED ON A TELEPHONE REPORT FROM THE ERSA CORRESPONDENT IN MEXICO CITY STATING THAT PUBLIC INTEREST IN TORRIJOS' VISIT HAS INENSIFIED WITH THE PUBLICATION THERE OF THE AP STORY ON MCAULIFFE'S REMARKS SEMI-INDEPENDENT "LA ESTRELLA" AND "STAR AND HERALD" HEADLINE AN AP MEXICO CITY STORY WITH TORRIJOS' STATEMEN "I AM TRAVELLING (TO MEXICO) TO EXPLAIN OUR CAUSE AND THEREBY TO BREAK A SILENCE IMPOSED 70 YEARS AGO". THIS REMARK IS APPARENTLY A GENERALIZED REFERENCE TO PANAMA'S CAMPAIGN TO MAKE THE CANAL NEGOTIATIONS A LATIN AMERICAN ISSUE RATHER A HARBINGER OF DRAMATIC REVOLUTIONS IN CANCUM. STORY ALSO QUOTES FOREIGN MINISTER GONZALEZ-REVILLA, IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION ABOUT THE PURPOSE OF THE VISIT, AS SAYING THAT "IF THE NEGOTIATIONS BREAK DOWN AND LATIN AMERICA IS FORCED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN PANAMA AND THE U.S., THERE WOULD BE SOME GOVERNMENTS WHICH WOULD MEDIATE THEIR SUPPORT". THESE QUOTES WERE PICKED UP BY AP FROM STATEMENTS PUBLISHED ON MAY 3 BY MEXICAN NEWSPAPER "EL DIA".
GONZALEZ

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Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
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